

MLA 2019 Featured Speakers

Opening Keynote With Dr. Steve Robbins



Wednesday, October 16, 2019
9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Your Brain is Good at Inclusion.... Except When It's Not

Dr. Steve Robbins provides an innovative, science-based look at the benefits of creating inclusive workplaces. Using the fields of cognitive neuroscience, socio-psychology, and communication (among others), Dr. Robbins explores with his audience the human, hard-wired need to be valued and included – and what happens when that need is not met. He demonstrates how our brain has natural tendencies (i.e. biases) that can help us achieve goals, but also lead to unintended consequences, like the exclusion of others who are different than us. He provides listeners with terms and a language that invite people into productive conversations about inclusion and diversity. In the end, Dr. Robbins shows that the key to battling bias in organizations begins with understanding how individuals' brains operate, but ultimately requires changes in organizational patterns of beliefs and behaviors.

About Dr. Robbins:

Often called a "diversity expert," Steve readily admits that he doesn't know if that's the right title. Steve considers himself more an experienced student of human behavior. For him, issues of inclusion and diversity are fundamentally issues of human behavior in a world filled with human differences.

His life experiences and academic background in communication science, social psychology

and cognitive neuroscience are the foundation from which he crafts his talks and workshops. That foundation guides his work and allows him multiple perspectives that he brings to bear on issues of inclusion and diversity.

Thursday Morning Keynote With Lance Werner



Thursday, October 17, 2019

9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Better Libraries and Stronger Communities through Kindness, Empathy and Love

Living with kindness, empathy and love provides benefits for both the giver and receiver. Studies show that these types of expression might slow aging, decrease pain and create a higher sense of emotional warmth that reduces stress and heart-health risks. For those on the receiving end, a greater sense of inclusion and value contribute to stronger emotional brand engagement. Workplaces with a culture of kindness, empathy and love also have lower staff turnover and greater effectiveness. This culture ripples out from individuals to others in the workplace, to patrons and throughout the community. Learn how Lance Werner, Executive Director, Kent District Library, created a coveted work culture at his library by implementing this mantra of kindness, empathy, and love. His approach was so successful with staff that the concept was turned into a new approach to customer service, termed the “KDL Way.” During this session, you’ll learn ways to implement this relationship-based approach at your library and create a more genuine style of management and customer service that focuses on individual needs.

About Mr. Werner:

Lance has served as Executive Director for Kent District Library since 2011. He received a juris doctorate degree from Michigan State University's College of Law and his master's degree in Library Science from Wayne State University (WSU). In 2018 he was chosen as Library Journal's Librarian of the Year, and in years past he was the recipient of the Joey Rodger Leadership Award from the Urban Libraries Council, Librarian of the Year Award from the Michigan Library Association (MLA), the WSU Distinguished Alumni award, and Library Journal's Mover and Shaker Award. Lance is currently involved in the ALA Policy Corps, WSU's Capital Campaign, MLA's Legislative committee, and recently graduated from Michigan Political Leadership Course."

Closing Keynote With Dr. Derrick Gay



Friday, October 18, 2019
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Re-framing Diversity for the 21st Century: Mirrors and Windows in Our Library Collections

In today's interconnected world, students require cultural competency and empathy to successfully navigate an increasingly diverse, globalized, and multicultural society. In most

schools, these efforts fall under the well-meaning yet often polarizing umbrella of diversity.

During this interactive keynote, Dr. Derrick Gay will reframe diversity and discuss the critical role of librarians to curate collections that provide students the opportunity to cultivate 'Mirrors and Windows,' where they are able to see themselves (mirrors) and connect with others who are different (windows) in meaningful ways that cultivate cultural competency, promote empathy, and deepen inclusion.

About Dr. Gay:

Dr. Derrick Gay is an internationally recognized consultant to organizations, both domestically and abroad, on issues of Diversity and Inclusion, Cultural Competency, and Global Citizenship. Dr. Gay collaborates with thought leaders to cultivate cultural competency, promote empathy, and deepen inclusion.

Dr. Gay has been featured in the [New York Times](#), Washington Post, The Huffington Post, [El Tiempo Latino](#) and on [NPR](#), [The Brian Leher Show](#), and 60 Minutes. Dr. Gay has also produced two TEDx Talks: “[The Double-Edged Sword](#),” which explores the irony that the word diversity often undermines diversity goals; and “[Why Elephants Hold the Key to Success in the 21st Century](#),” which explores the nature of racial discourse in the United States.

In addition to his direct work in the nursery-12th grade world, Dr. Gay also advises Sesame Street; KIPP Foundation and [American Montessori Society](#)

. He also serves as a Board Member at The Caedmon School in NYC, Greens Farms Academy in Westport, CT; and The National Guild for Community Arts Education, in NYC.

Dr. Gay is a proud graduate of Whitney Young Magnet High School; Merit School of Music; Oberlin College (BA in Romance Languages); Oberlin Conservatory of Music (BM in Opera); Columbia University (MA, Klingenstein Program, Educational Leadership in Independent Schools); and The University of Pennsylvania (Ed.D Educational Leadership).